

Message Text

PAGE 01 VIENTI 07362 270817Z

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ACTION SS-30

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R 270632Z OCT 73
FM AMEMBASSY VIENTIANE
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INFO AMEMBASSY BANGKOK
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AMEMBASSY SAIGON
AMEMBASSY TOKYO
AMEMBASSY PARIS
AMEMBASSY LONDON
AMEMBASSY CANBERRA

C O N F I D E N T I A L VIENTIANE 7362
EXDIS
E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PGOV, LA
SUBJECT: PRIME MINISTER'S VIEWS ON FUTURE AID TO LAOS

1. MR. ROBERT NOOTER OF AID/W, USAID DIRECTOR MANN AND I CALLED ON THE PRIME MINISTER, SOUVANNA PHOUMA, TODAY FOR A REVIEW OF THE SITUATION AND TO PERMIT MR. NOOTER TO OBTAIN SOUVANNA'S ASSESSMENT OF THE AID RELATIONSHIPS LAOS WILL HAVE ONCE THE PGNU IS FORMED.

2. IN REPLY TO QUESTIONS FROM MR. NOOTER, SOUVANNA EXPRESSED CONFIDENCE THAT THE U.S. AID TO LAOS WOULD CONTINUE MUCH AS BEFORE FOLLOWING THE INTEGRATION OF THE PATHET LAO INTO THE GOVERNMENT. AS HE HAS ON PREVIOUS OCCASIONS, SOUVANNA STATED THAT THE PL WOULD WELCOME U.S. ASSISTANCE AND THAT HE FORESAW NO CONCEPTUAL OR OPERATIONAL PROBLEMS. HE RECALLED THAT PRINCE SOUVANNAVONG HAD WORKED CLOSELY WITH THE U.S. AS MINISTER OF THE PLAN IN 1962 AND OPINED THAT HE WOULD DO SO IN THE FUTURE. WITH REGARD TO FEOF HE STATED THAT THE PL WOULD NOT BE SO SHORT-SIGHTED THAT THEY WOULD SCUTTLE THIS ESSENTIAL STABILIZATION MECHANISM.
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EM IN ANSWER TO A QUESTION ABOUT COMMUNIST AID, SOUVANNA STATED THAT HE HAD ASSURANCES FROM THE SOVIETS (AND HE IMPLIED FROM THE CHINESE) THAT THEY WOULD GIVE AID TO THE CENTRAL GOVERNMENT AFTER THE PGNU IS FORMED.

HE ALSO COMMENTED THAT THE ECONOMIC SITUATION IN THE COUNTRY WOULD IMPROVE WITH THE OPENING UP OF COMMERCE BETWEEN THE TWO ZONES.

4. I HAVE AN APPOINTMENT WITH SOUVANNA ON OCTOBER 30 AND WILL LEAVE THE LETTER ON MILITARY ASSISTANCE WITH HIM AT THAT TIME (DEPTEL 209975). IN THE COURSE OF TODAY'S DISCUSSION, HOWEVER, SOUVANNA COMMENTED THAT THE AGREEMENT AND PROTOCL DID NOT PREVENT THE CONTINUING RECEIPT OF MILITARY ASSISTANCE. HE STATED THAT SUCH ASSISTANCE WAS ESSENTIAL IN THE SHORT-TERM AND UNTIL COMMUNIST INTENTIONS WERE CLEAR.

5. THE PRIME MINISTER INFORMED MR. NOOTER THAT HE HAD HEARD RUMOURS THAT DEVALUATION OF THE KIP MIGHT BE UNDER CONSIDERATION IN WASHINGTON. HE WANTED TO MAKE IT VERY CLEAR THAT HE CONSIDERED SUCH A DEVALUATION TO BE EXTREMELY ILL-ADVISED AT THIS TIME AND EXPRESSED THE HOPE THAT THIS TOPIC BE DROPPED FOR THE TIME BEING. MR. NOOTER REPLIED THAT THE U.S. HAD NO FIXED VIEWS REGARDING DEVALUATION AND THAT CONSIDERATION OF THIS TOPIC WOULD DEPEND ON FUTURE POLITICAL AND BUDGETARY DEVELOPMENTS. THE PRIME MINISTER NOTED THAT THE PEACEFUL RESOLUTION OF THE LAO PROBLEM WAS BEING CLOSELY WATCHED BY MANY COUNTRIES AND THAT HE WAS HOPEFUL THAT THE JAPANESE AND OTHERS WOULD MAKE SIGNIFICANT CONTRIBUTIONS TO LAOS ONCE THE POLITICAL SITUATION WAS CLARIFIED. HE SAID HE EXPECTED PROGRESS TOWARDS A PEACEFUL SOLUTION TO BE RESUMED AND WAS CHEERED BY THE FACT THAT PHOUN SIPRASEUTH WOULD BE RETURNING TO VIENTIANE TODAY.

6. COMMENT. AS USUAL SOUVANNA RADIATED CALM OPTIMISM AND IMPERTURABILITY. IT IS DIFFICULT TO ACCEPT HIS BLAND ASSURANCES THAT THE AMERICAN AID PROGRAM WILL BE VIRTUALLY UNAFFECTED BY THE ASSUMPTION BY THE PATHET LAO OF A SIGNIFICANT ROLE IN THE GOVERNING OF THIS COUNTRY BUT
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THIS IS HIS STANDARD POSITION.
WHITEHOUSE

NOTE BY OC/T: HANDLED EXDIS PER MR TWOHIE-SSO,

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PHNOM PENH
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